



City of Gaithersburg Press Release

Contact: Office of Communication & Public Engagement
City of Gaithersburg
301-258-6310
cityhall@gaitHERSBURGmd.gov

For Immediate Release

Gaithersburg Celebrates Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Dr. Gary Li to Accept Official Proclamation

GAITHERSBURG, Md. (April 19, 2023) The City of Gaithersburg celebrates and honors Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May with programs and a proclamation highlighting the culture, heritage, and achievements of our Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander neighbors. See the complete list [here](#).

Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Americans are part of the rich tapestry of American life in both our country and the City of Gaithersburg. Nineteen percent of the City's population is of Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander heritage and can trace their ancestry to 47 countries and territories including China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Afghanistan, India, and Armenia.

Americans of Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island heritage have distinguished themselves in many fields, from science and medicine to agriculture and commerce. They also contribute to our public life through the arts and literature and in government. Ruth Lutero, of Filipino heritage, is the recently appointed Director of Information Technology.

An official proclamation designating May 2023 as “Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month” in the City of Gaithersburg will be presented at the Mayor and City Council meeting on Monday, May 1 at 7:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend the meeting at City Hall, watch it live on [YouTube](#) or watch it via Zoom by [registering here](#).

Mayor Jud Ashman will present the proclamation to Dr. Gary Li, Ph.D., who joined Dr. Robert Gallo's laboratory at the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute in 1991. In addition to his busy professional life, Dr. Li is involved with numerous community events, activities, and organizations. He established the U.S. Association of Students and Scholars of Guangxi in 2002, which has grown to be the largest and most active community of Guangxi students and residents. In 2008, Dr. Li was elected President of the Chinese Alumni Association in Greater Washington, D.C.

Activities and programs throughout the month of May include:

Harmonious Art Group 23rd Annual Exhibition

April 28 – July 9

[Activity Center at Bohrer Park](#)

This annual exhibit showcases artwork by Asian American artists and highlights both Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. This year's exhibit celebrates the Harmonious Art Group's 30th Anniversary.

Multicultural Affairs Committee Exhibit

May 1 to 31

[Activity Center at Bohrer Park](#)

The City of Gaithersburg's Multicultural Affairs Committee celebrates the rich history, cultural influences, and heritage of Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders with an educational art display.

"The Elephant Whisperers" Documentary

Tuesday, May 9, 11 a.m.

[Benjamin Gaither Center](#)

Free

The Oscar-winning short documentary tells the story of Bomman and Bellie, a couple in South India who devoted their lives caring for an orphaned baby elephant named Raghu. The story forges a family like no other, testing the barrier between the human and the animal world.

The Art of Lei Making

Monday, May 15, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

[Kentlands Mansion](#)

\$50, \$45 City of Gaithersburg Residents

[Register here.](#)

Celebrate Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Month with a Native Hawaiian cultural workshop led by Kumu Kaimana Chee of Hālau Nohona Hawai'i. He will give a brief history and background of the lei, a floral garland common in Hawai'i that symbolizes love, friendship, celebration, honor, or greetings. Participants will also learn how to make their own lei and enjoy a traditional Hawaiian chant and hula performance in honor of the lei. All flower and lei making supplies are included in the registration. Recommended for ages 12 and older.

Indian Folk Dance Social with Smita Khatri

Friday, May 19, 12:30 p.m.

[Benjamin Gaither Center](#)

Free for Benjamin Gaither Center Members, \$5 Nonmembers

[Register here.](#)

Bhangra and Dandiya Raas are uplifting and joyful folk dances originated in the Indian regions of Punjab and Gujarat, respectively. These dances are often done in community gatherings. In this workshop, you will learn simple choreographed steps and dance with others. Light refreshments served.

Tasty Books: "Bilal Cooks Daal"

Saturday, May 20, 10:30 a.m.

[Casey Community Center](#)

\$5 per person, Individual tickets need to be purchased for each child and adult

[Register here.](#)

Stories come to life as they are read aloud and explored with hands-on crafts and snack-making. Adult supervision required. Bilal and his friends are playing outside when his dad calls him in to help cook his favorite dish, daal. Bilal's friends come in to learn about daal and how to make it - daal comes in many different colors and shapes. They all cook the daal together, and while they wait for it to finish, they continue to play together. Join us as we find out what Bilal's friends think of daal as we explore sharing food and sharing culture.

Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill in June of 1977. President Jimmy Carter issued a proclamation proclaiming the week beginning on May 4, 1979, as Asian/Pacific American Heritage week, and President Barack Obama issued a proclamation proclaiming May 2009 as Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. President Joe Biden proclaimed May 2021 as Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month, recognizing the history and achievements of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) across our Nation. Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders comprise many ethnicities and languages, and their many achievements embody the American experience.

The mission of the Multicultural Affairs Committee is to enrich our City through the promotion of understanding, respect, and appreciation of the many cultures of Gaithersburg. Learn more [here](#).

###